

REMARKS

Initially, Applicants would like to express their appreciation to the Examiner for the detailed Official Action provided, and for the acknowledgment of Applicants' Information Disclosure Statement by return of the Form PTO-1449.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication that claims 2-4, 7 and 9 contain allowable subject matter, on page 7 of the Official Action.

Upon entry of the above amendments, claims 2 and 8 will have been canceled, claims 1, 3, 5-7 and 9 will have been amended, and claims 18-23 will have been newly presented. Claims 1, 3-7 and 9-23 are currently pending. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the outstanding objections and rejections, and allowance of all the claims pending in the present application.

Applicants note that claim 1 has been amended to add the subject matter of claim 2, which the Examiner has indicated as being allowable. Applicants further note that claims 3-6 and 10-17 each respectively depend from claim 1. In this regard, Applicants respectfully request rejoinder of claims 11-17, which the Examiner had previously withdrawn from consideration, since each of these claims depend from claim 1, and are thus clearly allowable. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections and rejections, and an early indication of the allowance of

claims 1, 3-6 and 10-17.

Applicants note that claim 7 has been amended to place it into independent form, which the Examiner has indicated as being allowable. Applicants further note that claims 18-20 each respectively depend from claim 7. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections and rejections, and an early indication of the allowance of claims 7 and 18-20.

Applicants note that claim 9 has been amended to place it into independent form, which the Examiner has indicated as being allowable. Applicants further note that claims 21-23 each respectively depend from claim 9. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections and rejections, and an early indication of the allowance of claims 9 and 21-23.

On pages 5-7 of the Official Action, claims 1, 5, 6, 8 and 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b). Applicants note that claim 1 has been amended to include the subject matter of claim 2, which the Examiner has indicated as being allowable. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), and an early indication of the allowance of all of the pending claims.

COMMENTS ON REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

In regard to the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in claims 2-4, 7 and 9 on page 7 of the Official Action, Applicants do not disagree with the Examiner's indication that the prior art fails to disclose or teach various features of these claims. However, Applicants wish to make clear that the claims in the present application recite a combination of features, and that the patentability of these claims is also based on the totality of the features recited therein, which define over the prior art. Thus the reasons for allowance should not be limited to those mentioned by the Examiner.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Entry and consideration of the present amendment, reconsideration of the outstanding Official Action, and allowance of the present application and all of the claims therein are respectfully requested and now believed to be appropriate.

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so.

Any amendments to the claims that have been made in this amendment, which do not narrow the scope of the claims, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered cosmetic in nature, and to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should there be any questions or comments, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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